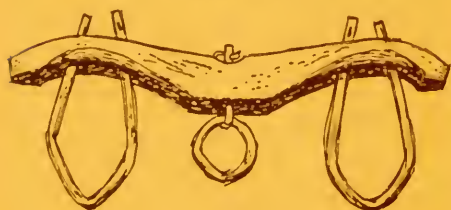


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LINCOLN

AND AN
URGENT WORLD PROBLEM

Fourth Annual Lincoln Lecture

COOPER UNION, N. Y.

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by

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INTRODUCTION

AFTER his great series of debates with Douglas and subsequent defeat at the polls in January, 1859, Lincoln returned to the quieter stream of politics and his law practice, no doubt expecting to campaign for the Senate again six years later. That fall he accepted with considerable excitement an invitation to give a popular lecture on February 27th in Henry Ward Beecher's famous Plymouth Church, with the understanding that it might be a "political lecture." Here was an opportunity to renew the debate with Douglas and to prove himself before the powerful east (and perhaps Lincoln knew or suspected that there was anti-Seward sentiment behind the invitation).

Senator Douglas had recently contended that according to the founding fathers, the federal government had no right to control slavery in the federal territories. Holding the opposite position, Lincoln set out to document it with a thorough study of the opinions of the founding fathers as preserved in the records of the Constitutional Convention and he "labored more carefully than he had in creating any previous oration." The result was the most learned, close-knit argument of his career.

For financial or other reasons the arrangements for the address had been taken over by the Young Men's Central Republican Union of New York City but it was not until Lincoln reached New York on Saturday, February 25th, that he learned he was to speak in the spacious Great Hall of the recently opened Cooper

Union. There he went on Monday evening, through a light fall of snow, to be escorted to the platform by the brilliant lawyer, Davis Dudley Field, and to be introduced to a distinguished audience of some fifteen hundred by William Cullen Bryant, poet and editor of the *New York Evening Post*. Many of that audience had come merely out of curiosity to see that raw boned giant of the west who had held his own so well against Douglas but they remained to hear an eloquent argument presented with genuine dignity.

The next morning four New York newspapers printed the address in full. In the following fortnight Lincoln gave eleven speeches in New England. In May he received the Republican nomination for the presidency and in November he was elected. Now we cannot say that the Cooper Union speech led directly to the nomination and hence election, but it certainly does seem fair to assert that a failure at the Cooper Union would have brought about a long lull in Lincoln's political career.

To commemorate the most notable event in the history of the Cooper Union platform, the Division of Social Philosophy invited Mr. Raymond Massey to read an abridged version of the famous speech during a meeting of the Forum on February 12, 1938. The following year the First Annual Lincoln Lecture was delivered by T. V. Smith, Congressman-at-large from Illinois. Then came that complete humanist, John Erskine, and the beloved president of Hunter College, George N. Shuster. Now we are privileged to enjoy in print the Fourth Annual Lincoln Lecture by a profound student of Oriental culture who knows the dangers of a world divided against itself.

—HOUSTON PETERSON

The Division of Social Philosophy
The Cooper Union

Lincoln

AND AN URGENT WORLD PROBLEM

FOUR score and three years ago, a tall, gaunt, serious man stood in this very spot and set forth a program for a troubled nation. He spoke with such learning and firm logic, with such judgment, courage, and with such an inspiring affirmation of moral principle, that the country was convinced that here was the man of the hour and its next President. So lucid, so sincere, so high-minded were his words spoken on that memorable occasion, that they still and will stand as a model of public utterance and a guide to the nation.

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and on his heart were laid the tribulations of many. But he was also a man of action, with a specific, realistic, effective mind. No leader of any people ever faced a more formidable or more significant task. No leader has ever proven more completely adequate.

Lincoln has been amply eulogized in rhetoric and in poetry, enthusiastic as well as coldly critical historians have analyzed and appraised every recorded act. But in the love and reverence conferred by an entire nation, in the grateful memory of the oppressed peoples everywhere, in the living power he still exercises in the hearts and in the affairs of men, there lies a tribute more profound than anything that can be pronounced.

He knew that at any hour during the whole of that dreadful conflict, a misstep could mean almost irretrievable calamity. He knew failure meant not merely a disaster to the country and the frustration of its dearest ideal, but a defeat for humane and democratic principles everywhere. He knew that his own life was in constant jeopardy; but he did not falter nor was his judgment ever clouded. It was a serious, perhaps critical moment in the life of mankind, and his was the triumph of all.

“And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down

As when a kingly cedar, green with boughs,

Goes down with a great shout upon the hill,

And leaves a lonesome place against the sky . . .”

His soul goes marching on! He is still and must forever be a creative and moulding force in the life of the nation, a force, however, that must be continuously clarified and revived lest in the confused din of world events the simple and forthright wisdom of this great soul may be obscured. Because his character and achievement express what is most essential and vitalizing in the American tradition, because it is familiar and congenial to us all, the invocation of his spirit is the more reasonable and natural. No situation can be too novel for it not to be seen in the light of this man's wisdom. Lincoln himself would have been the last to approve of his words being transfixed as dogma. But as he so adequately embodied the spirit and purpose of the American people, an appeal to him is to our own truest and finest selves.

We face today problems quite as dangerous, difficulties perhaps more formidable than those that so deeply tried his firm soul. And there are many striking analogies between his world and ours. The world that Lincoln knew, his America, after nearly a hundred years of lively experiment in concerted living, planning

and progress, in a resolute though often wayward and confused effort to achieve a new form of political union, faced the chaos and horror of civil war. The nation had been unable to foresee or control the conflict of regional and economic forces that nearly destroyed it. Temporizing expedients, the patching up of social fractures or the attempts to bridge the political ravines were futile. Passions were too hot, selfishness too stubborn, information, judgment and tolerance were too often lacking. It was a failure both of intelligence and good will, a bitter and ghastly failure that nearly cost the country its life. For had America been balkanized, had several nations crowded each other on the Mississippi River, or contested for privilege and opportunity, East and West, North and South, the Civil War would have been a prelude to others more appalling. The preservation of the union therefore became the supreme task of the time, the one imperative recompense to all who had struggled and suffered to create a nation; the one hope for permanent peace and progress resumed; the main service that this country could render mankind as a whole.

The crisis that then threatened to disrupt America is now multiplied a hundred-fold, for now the whole world itself is engaged in a civil war, infinitely more horrible than that which saddened the lives of our fathers. All nations are indeed members one of another. Selfish and shallow people have sought to deny it. The timid and irresponsible, with sophistry and violence have sought to evade it. Again we hear Cain's immortal blasphemy — "Am I my brother's keeper?" But the fact remains that we all have fraternal obligations and that the fortunes of all are deeply intertwined. The nations of this earth now have a common destiny. It is for us, the living, to decide whether it is a destiny for good or for evil — whether mankind shall step forth to "an ampler day divinelier lit" or whether it is ours "to expire in a torrent of darkness." How shall the momentous issue be decided? Only by a new vision, by renewed courage, by tenacious informed and realistic planning — in short, by a spirit worthy of Lincoln at his greatest.

Certainly we have not these last few decades measured up to him or been adequate to our obligations—nor even our interests. The tinkering and the patching that proved so futile in the twenty years before the Civil War have been quite as futile in the truce that followed the first world war. Mankind has again shown itself selfish, recalcitrant, stubborn, evasive, and culpably irresponsible.

We heard as in a troubled sleep the fateful tread of another war steadily approaching. The statesmen of the western world showed themselves more confused, inept and incompetent than were the statesmen that struggled in the days of the great compromises, and the end is the same. Woodrow Wilson clearly saw world federation as the only way of salvation, as the only possible recompense for the dead. He not only proclaimed it with eloquence, with sound historical judgment, but for it was willing, in Lincolnian spirit, to sacrifice other lesser interests. Again, the same short-sighted and selfish blocked the way. Again those who honestly though naively believed that the world could be fragmented into independent units and still function, frustrated his vision; and now mankind is paying in blood, and suffering immeasurable, for their mistakes.

Consider again the challenging similarities of the problem, and in how many senses our world is no larger than the Union Lincoln labored to save; indeed how startlingly small the whole fast-shrinking earth, how alarmingly close the other peoples of the earth today.

A journey from Boston to San Francisco was in Lincoln's day an ordeal of weeks. Other journeys within the country's borders could be mapped that would have been matters of months. Measured by transportation and communication time, Lincoln's world was actually larger and almost as unmanageable than our own. From Springfield, Illinois, to the Capitol in Washington took

Lincoln longer than for Franklin Roosevelt to get to Brazil, which in the lifetime of everyone here was once a three week's journey. One can reach Washington from Moscow, Cape Town or Calcutta, quicker today than from most parts of the United States in the days of the Civil War.

Consider and reconsider. Must we repeat the same errors that twice almost cost the nation's life and which could now cost the life of civilization itself? Are we once more to be confused and driven by the dangerous emotions of regionalism?

The Civil War was in many respects one of the saddest and most dreadful wars mankind had ever fought. Men had seen it coming, but as if gripped in a nightmare, were powerless to arrest impending disaster. To them as to many now the issue seemed simple and the power so preponderant on one side that the outcome was assured. Here were men of the same speech with common traditions, with the sense of common historic achievement and even the sense of a common historic mission, killing each other with a ferocity made the more horrible by their bravery. The great resources of the North were balanced for a long time by the superior military genius and defensive advantage of interior lines and familiar terrain in the South. The power of the North was compromised by disagreements and often bitter conflicts over the purposes of the war. The fervid abolitionists saw the freeing of the slaves as the only justifiable issue. Others, like Lincoln, insisted that the preservation of the Union was the far greater; that the Union preserved, slavery could gradually and by legal means be dissolved. The South had its perplexities too. Despite the intemperate words with which each side abused the other, abuse in which Lincoln took no part, both seemed but half conscious of what the wisest historians regard as the major cause of the conflict, namely, *regionalism*, or *sectionalism*, as Lincoln called it — a regionalism which threatens us again.

There was a deep contrast in the way of life of North and South which led to mutual dislike, then to contempt and hatred.

The Southern gentleman living quietly, with intelligent enjoyment of many of the finest aspects of leisure, regarded the shrewd, shop-keeping, horse-swapping, aggressive Yankee as a disagreeable character, the more odious for his sanctimonious pretensions, to say nothing of the fact that he lacked manners and probably was a too exacting creditor! New England fanaticism, intolerance, and self-righteousness, of which there was plenty, were infuriating to Southerners. The North, on the other hand, confident of the value of its qualities of industry, discipline, energy, the deep-seated ethical impulse which lay at the base of Puritanism, was likely to regard the Southerner as indolent, conceited, selfish and cruel; hot-tempered and unreasonable, to boot. That neither side was just what the other thought is not the question. For out of geographical and economic factors that persistently operated, there gradually developed conflicting social values and hostile attitudes that were not adequately expressed in words, and these attitudes and the emotions which clustered around them superheated every issue with animosity and clothed the most stubborn and unreasonable resistance in the livery of virtue. Loyalty to land, to sovereign state, to the law as they saw it; fidelity on the other hand to the most sacred and imperative concepts of the rights of humanity, and a clear sense of the destiny of democracy as a beacon light to the whole world and a pledge to mankind — how in such conflicting attitudes could one expect to find concord? How could such a conflict be settled by speeches or by Missouri Compromises or the work of the surveyor or politician? The blind forces of regional hostility thus inflamed every question, and drove this land into a destructive, fratricidal war.

Lincoln had the genius to discern the essentials of this conflict. Perhaps not fully aware of the deeply social character of the struggle, he sensed and dreaded its bitterness which he did his best to forestall and alleviate, for he was intensely conscious of the fact that those of the South were — “not inferior in reason and justice to any other peoples.” In the darkest days, he still counted them the brothers of the North, to be treated as such. He would

not admit a regional cleavage that would make us two nations. His imagination and his sympathies were vivid and comprehensive. He looked back upon the nation born in common travail, he looked forward beyond the bitter hatreds of the moment to a nation healed and one again. On every problem he concentrated the most characteristic and the highest qualities of mind and heart that this continent has yet brought forth: unfaltering courage, utter sincerity, a deep sense of humanity, infinite patience, skill in dealing with men, a first class and disciplined intelligence, and over all a great vision to which he was utterly faithful. He was America — healing herself.

The world today faces the same kind of crisis, engendered by not dissimilar causes. The Civil War now raging — for mankind is one great nation — could destroy not merely a single country but civilization itself. They are indeed simple minded and dangerous counsellors who think that all that is necessary is to kill off the fanatical ruffians in the aggressor states, and mankind will settle down to a just and prosperous life. So we thought in the first war. “Hang the Kaiser”—and mankind will live happily ever after, shouted many political simpletons. In selfishness and sheer stupidity we seceded from the task of peace and reconstruction. With irresponsible levity we ran out on every great and constructive effort to organize the world, turned with relief to what some called “normalcy”—a blasphemous caricature of the national ideal. Every man was to ‘get his’ and ‘get his quick’—and to revel in every luxury that a clever industrial age could produce and an adolescent culture enjoy. We tolerated the most absurd and debilitating contradictions such as demands on other nations for the payment of impossible sums to be transferred across impossible tariff barriers that we ourselves in misguided selfishness erected.

The bitter chastisement of the thirties, with the economic depression that spread grim misery and despair throughout the land, which actually, as a few economists and historians discerned,

brought this country to the verge of chaos and collapse . . . this was but one of the evil consequences of our relapse into regionalism. And we learned but slowly. Even more fateful was the sabotage of nearly all efforts for international organization. Permanent international order was and is impossible without the active and enthusiastic support of America. But we did not then have the vision, or the grace, we did not even have the courage or the good will to cooperate with the forward-looking constructive forces in the world with any energy of conviction. We preferred a new, larger and, as the event has proved, a more perilous brand of sectionalism. With the same unreasonable stubbornness with which Lincoln charged the South, we tried to deny the fact of the fast growing world unity that involved us all in a common destiny. We tried then and some are still trying to do just what Lincoln said was impossible, to arrest the processes of history.

So in that sorry decade of the thirties while the nations, hour by doomful hour, piled up the faggots for their own funeral pyre, we were fearful or indifferent. We ignored the confident faith in moral principles, the uncompromising fidelity to the larger and more remote issues which Lincoln, at this very desk, once commended to the nation — so we stumbled along the fatal and soul-corrupting path of evasion. We, too, tried the plausible and seductively easy way of appeasement — of which our traffic with Franco, Mussolini, and Japan is melancholy witness.

We fed scrap and oil into the capacious maw of the Japanese war machine. Now we are short of both. We shed a few crocodile tears over the shameful tragedy in Spain, victim of international brigands, yet in her darkest hour we, the champions of liberty, denied her the right, legally and morally hers, to acquire the means for self-defense. Just as by an ethically shabby pretense we declared an embargo against Italy and Abyssinia at the same time, to the jubilation of Mussolini and the despair of Haile Selassie, who was serving his country with a courage and spirit worthy

of Washington. As he said in his last melancholy appeal to the assembled nations — “God and history will judge your verdict.”

The judgment has been delivered—and in one word—“Guilty.” Now the nations are paying in blood and anguish for this and other crimes against the unity and common interest of mankind.

We thought we were smart to play with reactionary elements in Europe, and some are still at it. We could not see the simple outlines of a great, humanistic upsurge and reorganization in Russia, but concentrated too much on the short-comings and listened too willingly to superficial, ill-tempered and misleading accounts that disqualified us from justly appraising the momentous force that is more than any other cleansing this earth from the pestilence of Fascism.

Again, regionalism, capitalized by cheap politicians, envenomed our relations with the Orient. It is not impossible that the liberal elements in Japan might have held that doomed country in the paths of peace and good will, for Japan was turned to its hysterical and savage course of conquest, not by a unanimous affirmation of its people, but by a group of unsound and vicious, excitable and narrow-minded men, who thought to assuage inordinate pride by grandiose compensatory ambitions. It was they who adroitly exploited the humiliations and affronts to which they felt they had been subject and of which our country was not wholly innocent. Yes, most of the country was uninformed and indifferent and the West Coast was nervous and fearful. Hence, we too were easy prey for political manipulation. The result we now know. It would be fatuous to think that it was all our fault; but it is certainly true that we did not do everything we might have to forestall the disaster. We felt too superior and too secure.

The regionalism or sectionalism, against which both Washington and Lincoln so earnestly warned us, we have tried as a world policy and it has been a complete and disastrous failure. It is a

policy that ignores the realities, evades responsibility, and doesn't even serve enlightened self-interest. Just as Lincoln saw that "a house divided against itself would surely fall," so a world similarly divided will meet recurring calamity.

A policy of moral, economic and political isolationism might be defended in a larger world; but not in this tiny globe to which we are all confined. Contacts are rapidly increasing, interests interweaving, ambitions conflicting. If we ignore these facts, we will again reap the whirlwind. Ignorance and indifference are especially dangerous. They leave us in the dark, swept this way and that way by unidentified forces that could bring us all again to the brink of ruin. And where there is ignorance the vacuum is readily filled by uninstructed imagination, prejudice, intolerance, and trouble-breeding misunderstandings that thrive unchecked.

A new approach is now a prime necessity and one of the most urgent tasks of our time. Isolation, apathy, complacency and the feeling of strangeness must give way to eager interest, sympathy, honor and friendship if we are ever to have permanent peace and a decent world in which the universal human values can be realized for all. Our ignorance is really appalling — matched only by our presumed self-sufficiency. For example save for a few scholars we know neither the languages, the literature, philosophy, or social life of the Orient, except in a dim, confused and partial way. Some know the art of several regions. All know something of one Asiatic religion — Christianity — and little or nothing about other inspiring visions of the good life; religions to which hundreds of millions own allegiance, religions that each have some word of blessing for mankind. How shall we remedy this dangerous and impoverished ignorance and reestablish contact with what is spiritually our own motherland? In the President's momentous words: "The old term 'western civilization' no longer holds. World events and the common needs of all humanity are joining the culture of Asia with the culture of Europe and of the Americas, to form for the first time a world civilization."

How shall this world civilization be constituted and established? It is to the Orient, first of all, that we must address ourselves, for there is the bulk of mankind; there are the ancient and traditional cultures which give substance and longevity to their life and which once provided the basis of our own; there are magnitudes that make the western world look small; there are potentialities beside which we are ultimately weak. This is the world that we must understand, that we must cease to affront lest the sheer weight of numbers and the residues of material power shall some day overwhelm us. And if the center of industrial and economic power now resides in the West, there is no guarantee that it will remain there. A distraught and sickened Europe will need generations to recover from the suicidal mania of internecine wars — “God’s red mark through your crazy, rotten civilization —” as Tagore said. Who can answer that indictment?

Within measurable time the Orient will be industrialized, spiritually speaking a dubious advantage. The resurgence of the entire continent demonstrates its vast reserves of vitality, its powers of adaptability, its universal fervor for a better and freer world. Let us not misunderstand these signs of the times — or undervalue Asia as we undervalued Russia.

An immediate fraternization with such a vast and complex world requires more than good will and need. Now that the physical distance that separated us has been overcome, we have a more formidable task of bridging the psychological gap. Moral isolationism, misunderstanding, mutual impulsive dislikes, born of dissimilarities, can be more stubborn obstacles than the seven seas.

We must repeatedly affirm and repeatedly demonstrate the essential unity of mankind. The differences have been dangerously exaggerated. The constitutional, common and congenial elements are denied or overlooked. Yet these very virtues and

the basic human relations are, despite superficial differences, essentially the same the world over.

But have we not, at least as regards the Orient, already established relations of mutual confidence and good will? True, our native spirit of generosity, our sense of a world mission, has sent to the Orient many emissaries and our hospitals, our schools, our relief agencies in nearly every country in Asia have built up for us friendship and gratitude. Our freedom from political ambitions has been a unique asset. But Americans have always found it easy to praise themselves and have on too many occasions thanked God that they are not as other peoples. And our attitude toward the Orient has been compounded in part of benevolence, but more of complacency, condescension and, again, ignorance.

Our schools in the Orient have taught the Missouri Compromise, as the English have similarly taught the wars of Oliver Cromwell. Never have they taught, with understanding or wisdom, of the heroic characters or the great world-building forces that were nurtured in Asia. And one reason they couldn't teach was because they didn't know; and they didn't know because of our own unconscious self-righteousness. Our too easy identification of material well-being, economic and military power with excellence has tended to conceal from us the greatness of Asiatic civilization, and to give us a feeling of superiority sometimes amounting to an arrogance that the peoples of the Orient will no longer tolerate. We didn't think it was necessary or worth while to study seriously the vast, rich and noble cultures of the Orient, from which we have so much to learn, and of which we must know more than a little if any real federation of man is to be possible.

It is Lincoln himself who can serve as one of the best links between America and Asia, for he has been understood, honored and loved in many part of Asia, and all the Asiatic nations would recognize in him a hero and saint and claim him spiritually

as their own. Judaism would see in him one of the major prophets — his fervor, his self-dedication, his vision of an assured and noble future, his unshakeable confidence in righteousness as the ultimate power, makes him one of their own. And was not the Bible, that supreme expression of the Judaic spirit, Lincoln's greatest educator? Christianity, the second phase of Judaism, can and has hailed him as the martyr saint. His infinite compassion, his surpassing love for his fellow-man for whom he readily laid down his life, his humility — all these are Christian virtues.

True, the Arabs would hardly have understood his moderation, yet they would have profoundly admired his tenacity of purpose; they would have honored his courage and his cool indifference to personal danger. That he came from lowly surroundings, they would have counted a merit. Was not their own prophet but a captain of a caravan and also acquainted with poverty? Lincoln's passionate devotion to freedom, something the Arabs prize devoutly, would win from them all applause, for the Arabs are by tradition and conviction democratic, and the power in the tribe has always derived its authority by election, not by divine or self appointment. It, in passing, is worthy of note that on our side the *milieu* out of which Lincoln came was friendly to the Arabs. It was Daniel Bliss who went to Beirut in 1856, and there opened what was to become the great American College in Beirut. By 1860 there were thirty-three schools for Arabs maintained by Americans. It was America who first undertook the education of Arabic girls. Under American guidance many Arabic textbooks were started. Butrus Bustami, the great Arabic lexicographer, was educated and supported by Americans. In fact, the intellectual upsurge of Arabic people, particularly in Syria, was very largely the consequence of the generous and sympathetic helping hand extended by Americans. Lincoln knew no Arabs — but he would have enjoyed meeting them, and they would at once have recognized him as a great *sheikh*.

And what of aristocratic Iran, the land of legend, of romance, of mighty monarchs and warriors, of great poets and artists? In Iran the king rules, not merely by divine sanction but is in his own person the surrogate of the Almighty. But here also, Lincoln would have been understood. Iran is not without its democratic traditions, and Kaveh, the great legendary hero of the country, who saved the land from the cruel tyranny of a royal oppressor was only a blacksmith; his banner, not the gold-and-jewel-encrusted standard of the great kings which cost millions, but his blacksmith's apron; his steed, not the gorgeously caparisoned and mighty animal we see on those colossal rock-carvings in Iran; but only a humble cow. Kaveh was a symbol of the virtues, the rights and the opportunities, the creative heroism of the common man.

In India, Lincoln's combination of humility, of fidelity to ideals, his great heart, his complete self-forgetfulness and utter dedication to the lives of common men — this would have made of him there, where compassion is the first of the virtues, a saint. Today in that great land he is so honored. Many passages in Indian literature describing the ideal man could be applied with little modification to Lincoln: "A man who is not overjoyed in prosperity, who is not cast down in adversity, who is steadfast in difficulties: such a man has been born for an everlasting ornament and protection to the world." Or again in the Buddhist scriptures: "Let a man overcome anger by love; let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality; the liar, by truth."

To the Chinese likewise, Lincoln is one of the great and inspiring heroes. The Chinese also have a democratic tradition more than a thousand years older than our own. Great office was not conferred in China merely by inheritance or military power but went by merit, irrespective of birth or privilege, tested by searching examinations to which the lowliest were welcome. A thousand times one could find in Chinese literature the description of the

good man which so perfectly fits Lincoln that the Chinese are ready to regard him as one of their sages, an exponent to all the world of the virtues which they most highly prize. Lincoln had that becoming sense of humility which the Chinese deem important as a mark of wisdom. Lincoln avowed the same optimism, the conviction of the essential goodness of man which is a fundamental faith of centuries in China, the source of their tolerance and good humor that they see so admirably exemplified in Lincoln.

He shared the Chinese faith in a supreme ethical power that made for righteousness. Like the Chinese, Lincoln was non-theological, remarkably free from the religious bigotry of his time, which the Chinese regard as so dangerous and so ignoble.

They, like Lincoln, place a high estimate on self-discipline. They are adept in contentment and devout believers in simplicity. The Chinese, as commanded by Confucius, regard skill in human relations as the first duty of man, a beautiful art to be learned throughout a lifetime. This has given them their poise, their flexibility, the sound judgment which yields on non-essentials, but attains the fundamentals, and which counsels good will and patience. All these typical Chinese virtues were also typical of Lincoln.

The Chinese have a very definite sense of mankind as a whole, a feeling that permeated Lincoln's life and every policy. No wonder that the life of Lincoln is taught in all the Chinese schools. No wonder he is a hero to that gifted and noble people. How many of their great heroes do we know?

An anecdote illustrates this Chinese feeling for humane as against the mechanical relations which the "efficient" modern American so often affects . . . Two are travelling in the heart of China: both speak the language, but only one understands the people. They have lost their way. The one calls out to a peasant

working by the roadside — “How far is it to Sinanfu?” . . . A long, stony, uncomprehending stare . . . Sharp and brisk and loud was the repeated request: “How far is it to Sinanfu?” This time not even a look. “What’s the matter? Is my pronunciation wrong?” “Pronunciation excellent . . . Manners bad,” said his companion. “Let me try.” Then, more slowly — “Elder Brother — elder brother!” Pause. The peasant looks up. “We are in trouble. Can you help us?” Now, contact established, comprehension dawns. A friendly smile — the helpful answer.

Strange, is it not, that the man whom we consider most perfectly and characteristically American, should be honored and beloved throughout the world? Is it that the most American is also the most universal, or that the truest and finest of human quality is the same for all? Surely the world reverence for Lincoln is a proof that after all our national ideals are not strange or separate.

Yet if this be so, it certainly behooves us to learn from each other — to set aside with Lincolnian humility, all arrogance and self-righteousness; to educate ourselves with the ardor and persistence with which he lifted himself to the highest rank among the wise. How much we have to learn we have not even guessed, and it is from the Orient particularly that we need to learn, not only for the enlightenment and enrichment of our own somewhat impoverished and monotonous lives, but also as a prelude and a discipline which will fit us for the new and grave role of world citizenship.

In our complacency we thought that *we* were the people, that we were God’s elect and all others lesser breeds without the law — we who in very fact are so young, oh so very young, still crude, uninformed, naively conceited. We must all go to school again, to the Orient as Europe once did; for the European cultures are recent and in various respects still immature offspring of the cultures of Asia. Three thousand years before Europe showed any

evidence of high intelligence or capacity for communal life, there were great civilizations in Iran, in Mesopotamia, and a little later in Egypt and a bit later still in India and in China. It is from Asia that we have derived all the basic techniques for living: metallurgy, the domestication of animals, and that most momentous of all, the discovery some 8,000 years ago of controlled agriculture, which made possible community life and the beginning of civilization — the crafts (building, pottery, weaving), the alphabet, writing, mathematics, all are of Asiatic origin.

Every religion worthy of the name was born in Asia. We have had our religious inventions — spiritually rather shallow contrivances which failed to meet the needs of the human soul, which withered and vanished in the hour of adversity, and are now minor historical curiosities. But the religions of Asia still console and inspire men and protect their deepest interests throughout the world. Christianity is only one of them, and Christianity had to struggle throughout most of the Roman world for survival against two rival Asiatic religions — both from Iran — Mithraism and later the Manichaeism which so alarmed St. Augustine.

How much do we know of Islam and the simple grandeur of Muhammad's life and teaching which has organized and fortified the life of hundreds of millions for more than a thousand years, which evoked a great civilization that preserved Classical culture and gave to Europe many essentials of its learning and thinking? Crude rivalries — military, commercial, religious — and the one-sided propaganda which has reported our Islamic relations have obscured the truth and left us sceptical, ignorant, contemptuous; attitudes which knowledge and understanding reveal as petty, as credulous and unworthy of an enlightened people.

What of Buddhism with its ennobling mission of compassion and its message that salvation comes from within, something earned, not magically conferred. In Taoism again, literally hundreds of millions of Chinese have found their souls enlarged and

strengthened. It has a universal message. What a pity that we know so little of it.

The time of America's childhood is past. For our own security, for our own enlightenment we must discard our self-satisfaction. We must open the doors to the wide and splendid vistas to which we have been blind. We must expand and enrich our somewhat meager and too uniform life so distorted by confused ideals, ambiguous values, hurry, and the lack of that essential leisure from which alone wisdom grows.

We are not yet a really cultivated people, certainly not in proportion to our capacities. What little contacts with Oriental culture we have had we have enjoyed and profited by, but they have been few and thin. Everyone knows something of Omar Khayyam, but how many know that in Iran, the most poetic of nations, he is but a minor poet. The Arabian Nights are an essential part of our heritage, but how much do we know of the magnificent Baghdad in which these stories were told, or of the India, Persia and Arabia from which they were derived? How delightful the Br'er Rabbit stories! And what are they? Fables carried here by the colored folk from Central Africa, wither they had been brought by Arab merchants and missionaries who had ultimately derived them from Persia and India, where for more than a thousand years they had been the common tales of the people.

The Divine Comedy of Dante, that mysterious effulgence of a stupendous imagination in perfect poetic form;—whence did it come? It is in large part a glorious transcript of a poem in Arabic by Ibn Arabi el Murcia, recounting the visits of Muhammad to heaven and hell, a compendium of stories that Ibn Irabi in turn had gathered from Asiatic sources.

Parsifal and Amfortas? They are Iranian legends and the Castle of the Grail still keeps guard on the misty heights above a deep abyss in southern Persia.

But *we* are civilized and cultivated, you say. Not by Asiatic standards. What a charming poet was Longfellow! There were two hundred greater than he among the poets of Persia alone. A wise and ennobling thinker was Emerson. Yes, but there were scores of greater Emersons in China preceding him by centuries. We have had our philosophers—William James, Josiah Royce—but India has been replete with profound thinkers for many centuries.

Of statesmen and conquerors in the west we have had aplenty. Yet how many prime ministers to surpass Iba Khaldoun or Nizam ul Mulk, and what European general could boast a military victory like that of the young Alp Arslan, who with 18,000 troops defeated 125,000 of Byzantine's best—and then organized all of Western Asia? We have our saints and heroes. How many do we know of that unnumbered congregation, beloved and honored in the countries of Asia, many of whom are as universal in character as Lincoln himself.

Surely, though, we are supreme in the fine arts? Not at all. European music in its own mode is unsurpassed. Oriental music, however, is far more serious than any save experts have guessed. Yes, the architecture of Greece and the engineering of Rome are, measured by their own purposes and principles, incomparable. Yet some architects would say that there are more masterpieces of architecture in Asia than in the whole of the Western world, and for a long list of arts the Orient has no rivals.

But certainly science, that is our unique achievement? Yet where did we learn its rudiments? From Asia.

By 1860 B.C. the Babylonians had perfected quadratic equations, with astute and penetrating comments thereon, and that very modern invention, non-Euclidean geometry—it stems from the excellent mathematician but second-rate poet, Omar Khayyam. Astronomy, Chemistry, Physics, Medicine—all began in the East.

European civilization went to school to the Orient, and Oriental guidance and inspiration has been continuous until the last desolate two centuries of temporary demoralization, poverty and frustration depleted the power and prestige of Asia. The presumed unique achievements of which we are proudest often had their roots in the Orient. Greek mythology and Norse myths are both derived from Iran. Early Greek sculpture, Greek geometrical ornament, have recently been proven as of Iranian origin—and if I speak more of Iran it is simply because I know so little of the rest of Asia—a most deplorable ignorance. Romanesque and Gothic architecture, those superb expressions of the mediaeval spirit—how deep their obligations to Iran, Armenia and Syria, without which they could not exist. The richness in color of European literature is also according to our best historians, largely of Oriental derivation. It was the ballads and romances of the Orient that infused our dreary chronicles with a glow and imagination that has charmed and enriched our whole culture. Professor Bode, that most eminent authority on Italian painting, declared that the infusion of color in European painting came via Venice from the Orient.

Our basic principles of social organization are Asiatic in origin and some of our wayward economic theories need to be corrected by reference to Asiatic practice and thinking.

Yes, we have learned much. We have forgotten much. And there is still much to learn. There is no call to imitate the Orient. It would be fatuous to propose the Orient as the long sought for Utopia, or to see in it the Golden Age, from which we have departed. It was a Babylonian tablet which, nearly four thousand years ago, declared: "The good old times have gone. Children are no longer respectful to their parents, and servants dress so like their mistresses that they cannot be told apart on the public street!"

The problem and the opportunity are too serious for sentimentality or superficiality. We can learn from the mistakes and the disasters of the Orient as well as from its achievements. But there we can find wisdom to supplement our own deficiencies. In the light of their experience some of our social habits are seen to be hostile to the deeper needs of the human spirit, and to threaten our ultimate peace of mind and accomplishment. For all the Orient the family is sacred and whole. In the family the individual finds discipline, status, moral and emotional security. With us the family is disintegrating, each member so often trying futilely to stand in his own strength or by a sterile uniformity living superficially the lives of others; repeating the same phrases, responding to the same excitements, doing too little as a group, seeking too much credit as individuals. Our rapid social change threatens the very integrity of society. Our boasted inventions produce every few years a new generation—a new generation, children whose lives and environment and ways are strange to their parents from whom they are often in consequence separated by misunderstands, hostility and distrust.

Asia affirms that social continuity is necessary, that tradition sustains and calms and confers power. It is a lesson that we must learn. Asia, on the whole, looks with dismay and disapproval on the swift mechanization of our life, frequently so inimical to the affairs of the spirit, and in which we tend to find pride and contentment, like children with toys, who ought to grow up and discover that the things of abiding excellence are not altogether obvious, and have to be won by more than cash and industry. We can learn that information is not wisdom, that incessant hurry is likely to be a circular process, sometimes spiralling downward.

America must now again go to the school of the Orient. And the task stretches out infinitely. The hundred courses we offer in our School for Asiatic Studies constitute only an introduction to the life of Asia. If we are ready to learn, from learning will

come respect, honor, affection; an elevated and enriched life, a capacity for coordinated effort; and we shall lay that base for world cooperation of which Lincoln dreamed and which would be the fulfillment of his great idea of federation.

These are not the counsels of sentimentality. This is a way for the future, without which there may be no future. It proposes a fulfillment in mature and responsible manner of the world mission which Washington and Lincoln so definitely foresaw and served.

By what right can we turn from our own unsolved problems to those of the whole world? In our own country, neither Lincoln's freedom nor Roosevelt's Four Freedoms are yet achieved. We have not even—shame as it is—done justice to the colored people. And Lincoln's great heart would be outraged if he saw the frustrations and injustices under which they still suffer—a new kind of bondage that must be broken so that all shall have ample freedom.

But our own difficulties cannot be solved separately. They are part and parcel of the world's problem. We can have neither peace nor prosperity nor justice as long as the world is tormented with strife, as long as conflicts smolder and discontent and injustices outrage men's hearts, as long as whole peoples are deprived of the benefits of civilization to which they are entitled. For our own safety, in our own interests, we have got to be generously world-minded.

Lincoln spoke of the universal liberty of mankind as one of the great ideals. He thought we had found a solution to the long mooted problem as to the capacity of man to govern himself. It almost looked as if we had, in the circumscribed communities of the past, although the Civil War said "Nay". "As Christ died to make men holy, let us die to make men free". So sang those lads in blue—they were very young—and their mangled bodies

littered the battle fields of Antietam and Gettysburg in proof of their sincerity. Are men yet wholly free?

And those that lie in Flanders field, tortured and broken—giving all to make that the last war. Was it? If not, whose fault? On us the living lies a grievous burden of penitence and indemnity.

Now we must learn all over again, and if America is sufficiently intelligent and open-minded enough to envisage the problems of man as a whole, we shall, through knowledge of other peoples and sympathy with their ideals, which are ultimately so like our own, help lay the foundations for that reasonable and humane world for which Lincoln labored, in which he believed, and for which he gave his life.

